CURRICULUM GUIDE

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Interim Elementary Curriculum Guide for

HANDWRITING

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Interim
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Guide for

HANDWRITING

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INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVES

Instruetion in handwriting is successful to the degree that it develops:

1. Legible writing.
2. Ease of writing.
3. Adequate speed.
4. A pleasing appearance through neatness and the functional arrangement of written materials on the page.
5. The desire to produce good handwriting as a result of the knowledge of its importance.
6. The ability to diagnose and correct specific faults.

PHILOSOPHY

Handwriting is a tool used to record and to communicate. As a tool to record and to facilitate thinking, handwriting may never be replaced. As a means of communication, handwriting in the adult world has been at least partly replaced by machines. In the classroom, however, it has maintained an important role. Thus, legible handwriting, easy to read and easy to produce at a reasonable rate, is an important goal of the school.

The single most important quality of good handwriting is legibility. The production of legible handwriting at a reasonable rate requires constant practice over a period of many years and must be assiduously maintained.

Extremes in the handwriting itself and in the means of producing it must be avoided. It seems safe to say, however, that no two pupils can produce their most legible and fluent handwriting with the same combination of posture, materials, position of materials, movements, and rhythm. It is obvious that no two samples of handwriting are or should be identical. Thus, special provisions must be made for all individual differences whether they are differences in handedness, coordination, or in physical proportions.

Growth in skill in handwriting is accompanied by growth in understanding and the development of favorable attitudes. As the pupil develops ability to isolate his difficulties, he increasingly understands how letter formation, spacing, slant, size, and alignment contribute to legibility, and as a result develops pride in the appearance of his written work.

Various handwriting tools and materials produce good results. Pupils should become aware of the need to match suitable materials with the writing situation. Fountain pens, ballpoint pens, and pencils are all useful in producing handwriting of high quality provided they themselves are of high quality.

Printing is easier to teach to Grade One pupils and bears a closer resemblance to the symbols used in beginning reading. Society, however, expects school graduates to use cursive writing and so a transition must be made. The time of transition should be flexible and be adjusted to suit individual needs. It is quite possible that a few children should never make the transition. While most children make the transition successfully and thereafter use cursive forms for most writing tasks, manuscript writing continues to be important for certain special uses such as map lettering, labelling, art work, and posters.

The development of legible and fluent handwriting is, then, an important goal of the school. The production of consistently good handwriting in all subject areas is a result of strong motivation by on-going programs of the school and of skilled instruction following the principles and suggestions indicated in the pages that follow.

LETTER FORMS

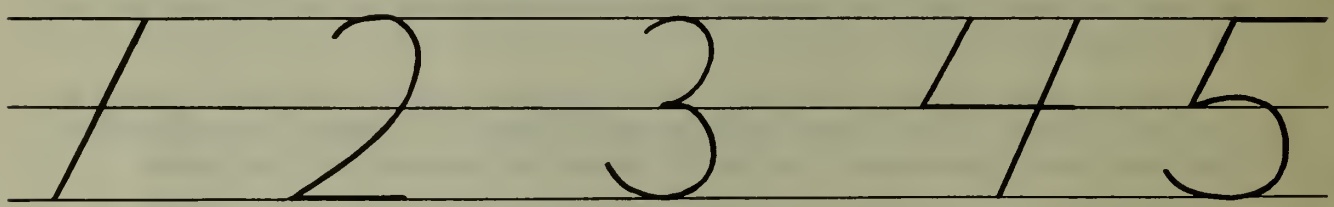
The models shown on the plates in this manual are suggestive rather than prescriptive. They are, however, simple, easily written forms which will provide a good base for a quick, legible, individual style in later years and should be considered carefully by the teacher before other forms are chosen. Variations from the commonly accepted forms should not be encouraged too readily in the hope that the individual style each pupil will develop later will be solidly based on easily recognized standard forms. Many pupils even in Grades Four and Five have been allowed to develop styles that are not so based and are to that extent difficult to read or are even quite illegible. Nevertheless, pupils who have been taught other forms than those presented here should not be required to change without good reason, provided that their letter forms are simple and legible.

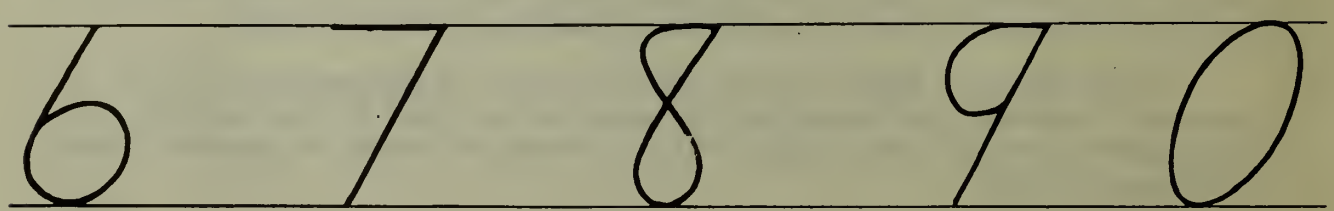
The responsibility rests on the teacher to check the individual pupil's writing at all times. This is particularly true, of course, in Grade One when the child begins to write, and in Grade Three when most children change from manuscript to cursive. Grade Four is a crucial grade in the development of good cursive handwriting. It is frequently forgotten that the Grade Four pupil has just barely finished the transition to cursive writing by the end of Grade Three and that he has, moreover, lost much of his skill during the summer holidays. It is therefore essential to review all the letter forms and indeed re-teach many of them before expecting the child to do much writing.

The school's responsibility for developing good handwriting should not end with Grade Six. Junior and senior high school teachers should be familiar with what has been done in the earlier grades and with the forms and standards used there. Help should be available for those pupils whose handwriting begins to deteriorate under the pressure of work in the secondary schools.

MANUSCRIPT WRITING

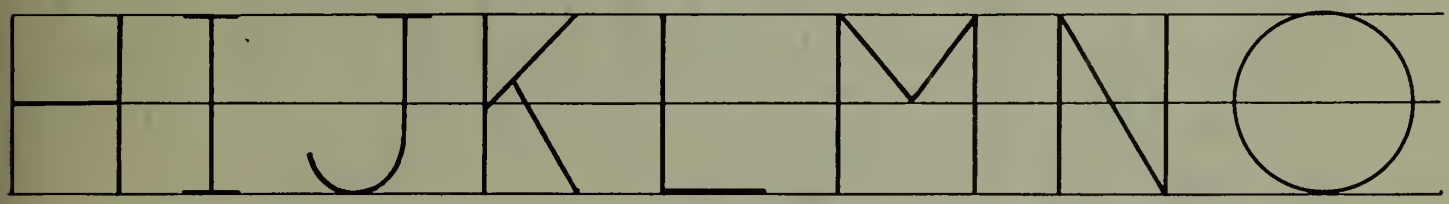
NUMERALS:

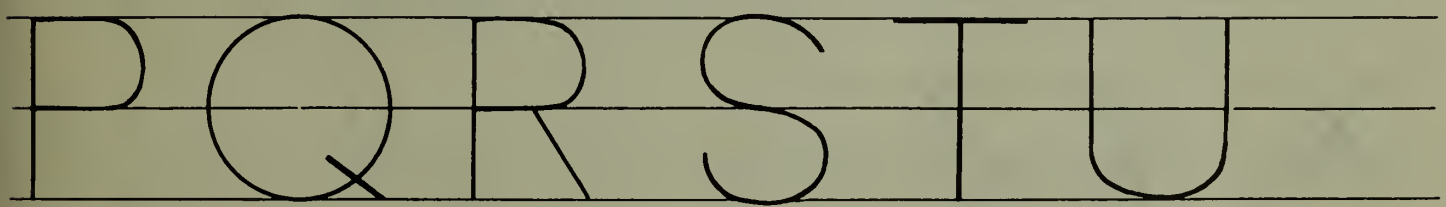


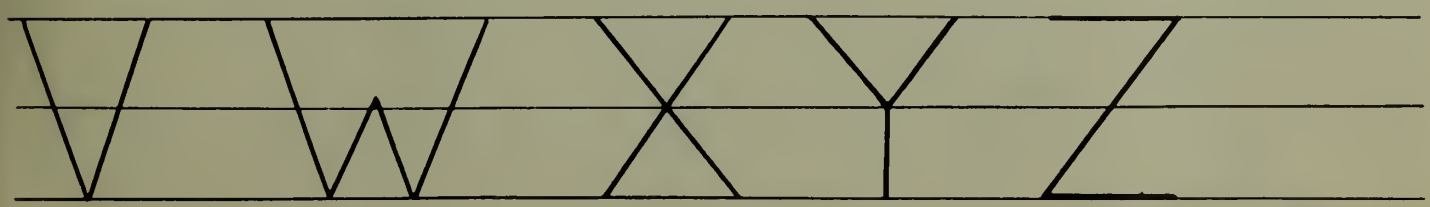


MANUSCRIPT WRITING

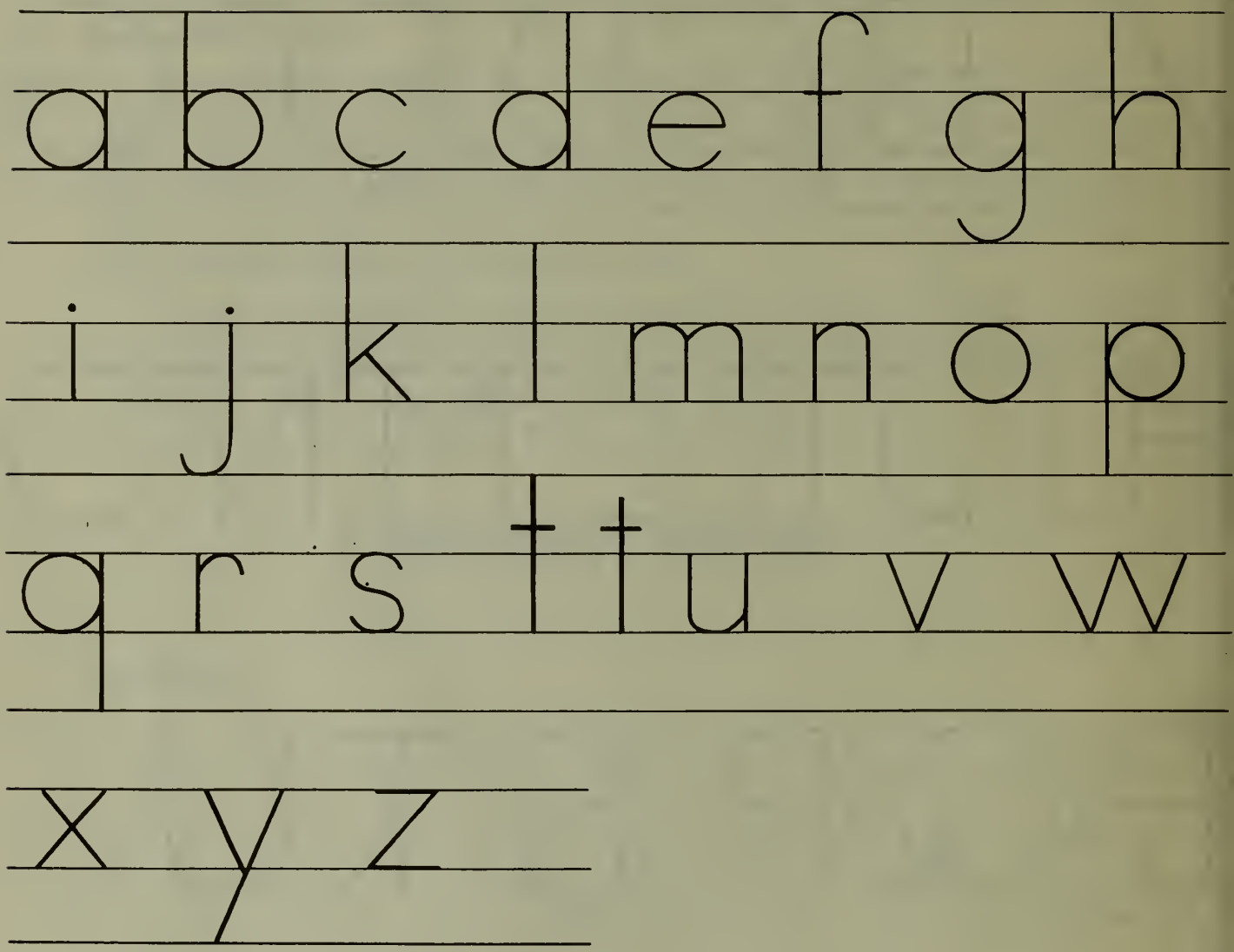
CAPITALS:





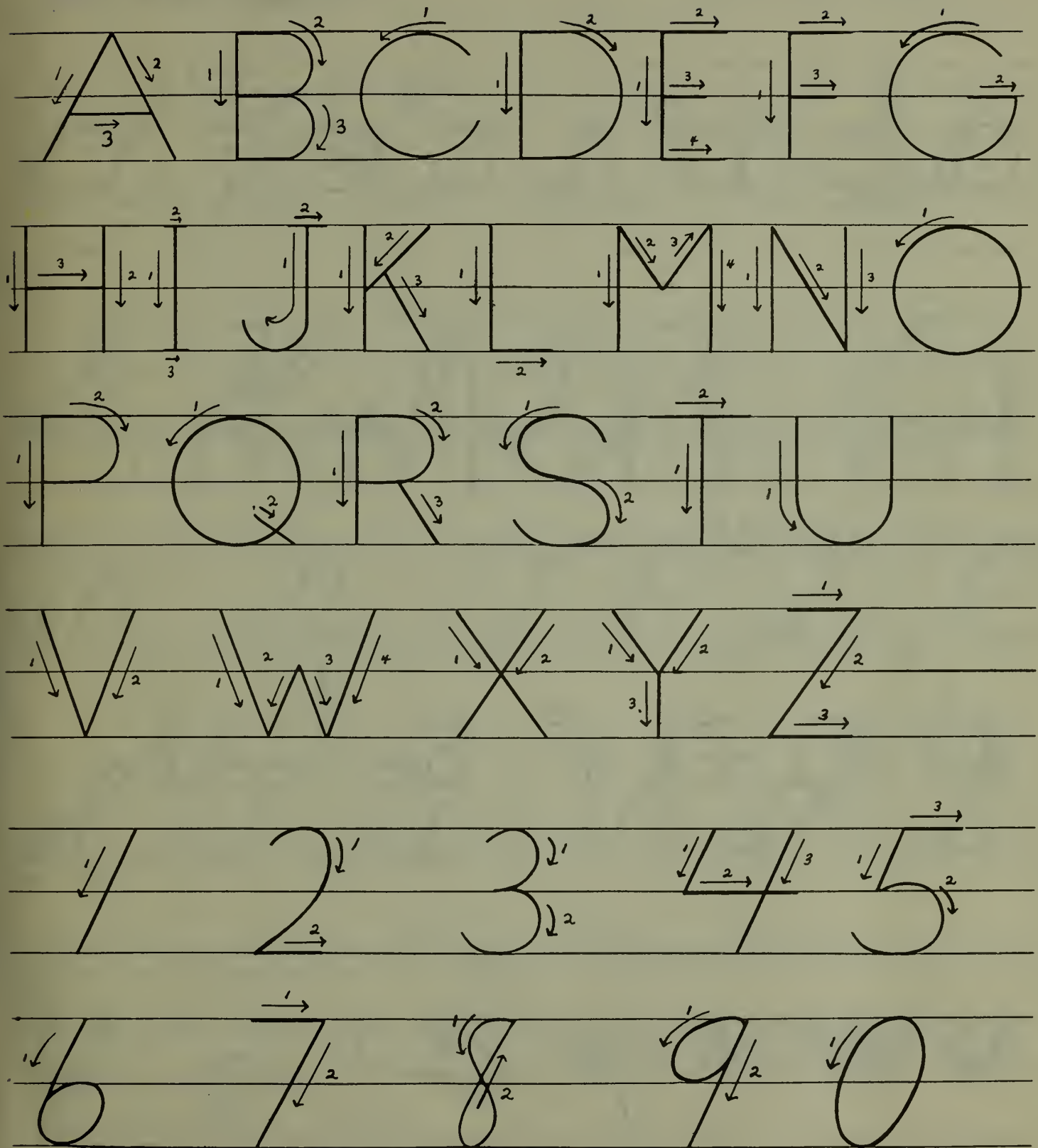


LOWER CASE LETTERS:



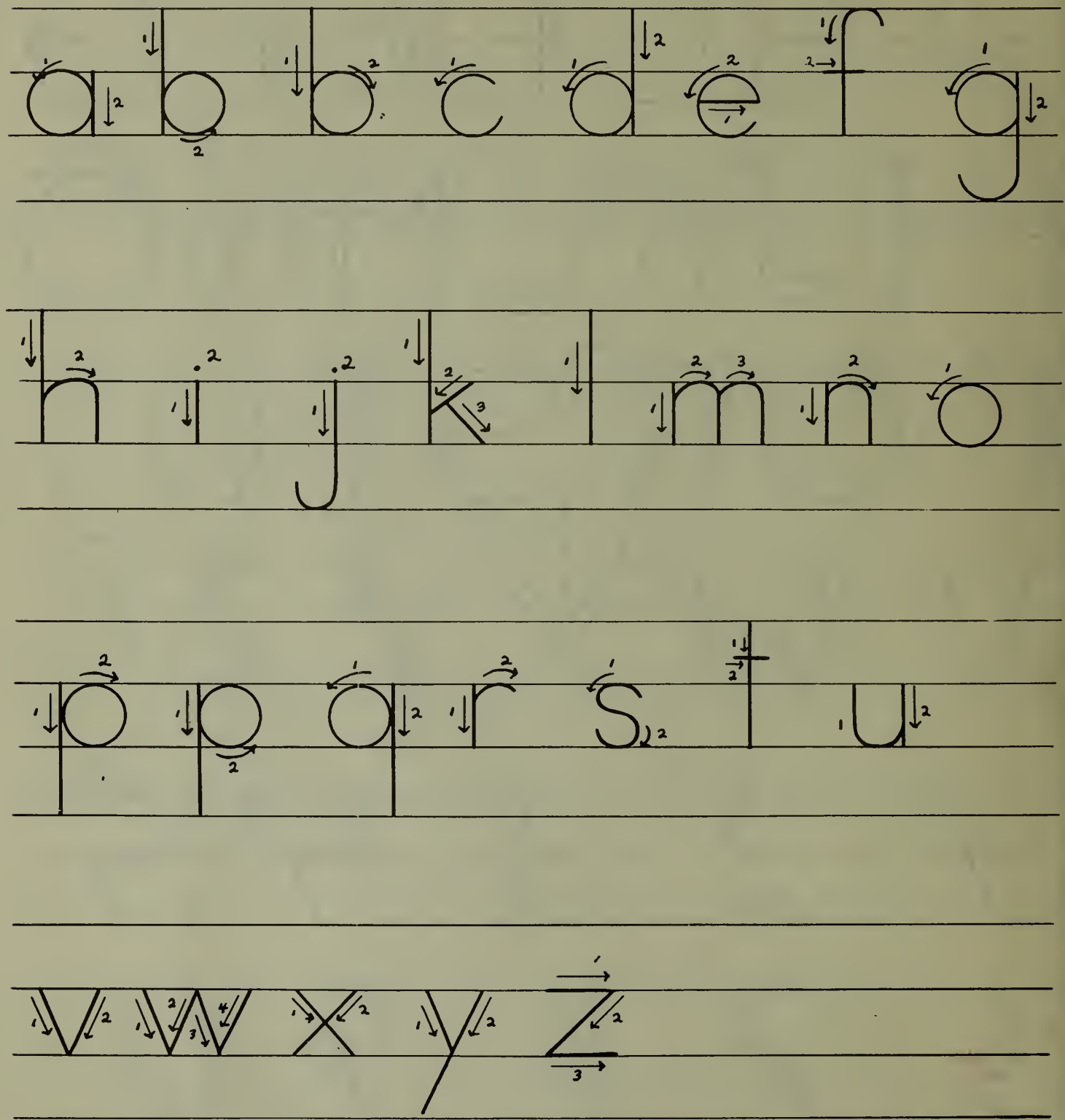
CORRECT ORDER OF STROKES:

CAPITALS AND NUMERALS:



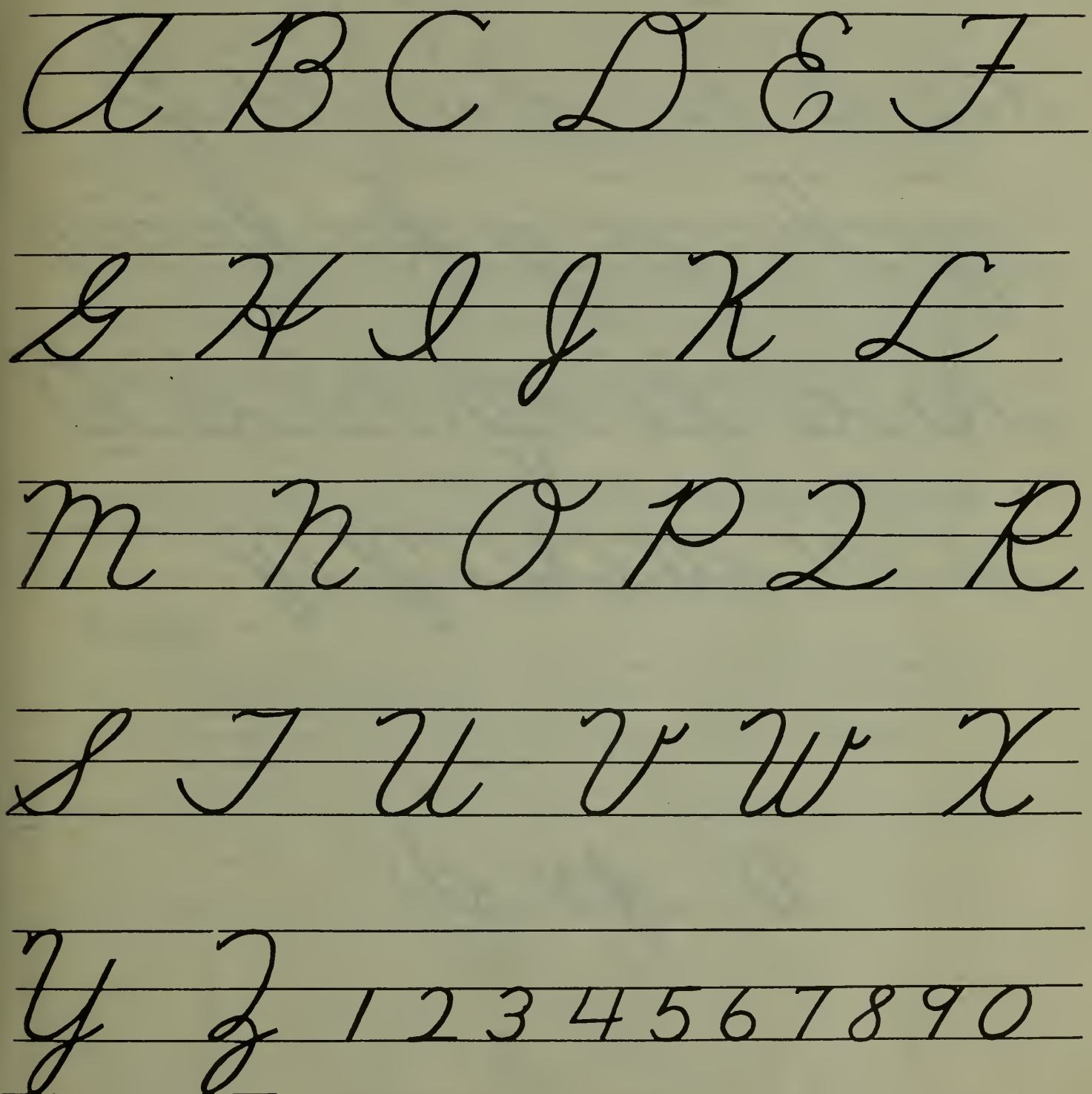
CORRECT ORDER OF STROKES:

LOWER CASE LETTERS:



CURSIVE WRITING

CAPITALS AND NUMERALS:



LOWER CASE LETTERS:

a b c d e f

g h i j k l m

n o p q r s t

u v w x y z

t p d

INSTRUCTION

MOTIVATION

Handwriting is a skill and, as in any other skill, excellence is achieved only through intelligent practice. The teacher is faced, therefore, with the task of providing relief from what might otherwise be a monotonous, tedious exercise, and with encouraging pupils to maintain a high standard. It is desirable that the pupil be stimulated to do his best in all written work at all times, not merely during the formal writing period. Several suggestions which may help to sustain interest follow.

Make all writing meaningful. When writing is done for a specific purpose, the child will learn that perfecting this tool of expression is his own responsibility. Encourage the pupil to do his best by letting him know why it pays to be a good writer. Use handwriting functionally so that there is much writing for genuine writing purposes. Give opportunity to participate in actual situations such as writing notices for the bulletin board, labelling exhibitions of work, keeping records, writing letters to be mailed, writing announcements, invitations or thank-you notes, and exchanging samples of handwriting with roommates or other pupils in the school. The number of situations which require writing may be increased as the need for purposeful, meaningful communication arises, so that writing becomes directly related to what the pupil wants to say.

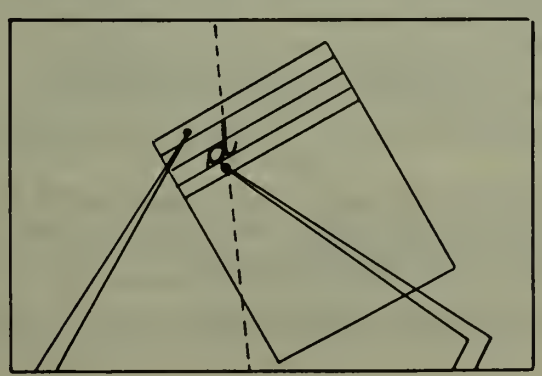
Perhaps the best motivation for good writing comes from the teacher. A high standard of excellence in all written work on the blackboard should be maintained. Notices on bulletin boards, and signs posted in the school should be neat and well executed. Comments, instructions, marks, or any notations inserted in pupils' workbooks or scribblers should also be in good handwriting. The attitude of the teacher towards writing should be positive. The teacher should make the writing period a pleasant experience, and show concern for good writing but not set standards too high. Goals should be relative and differentiated because what is a reasonable standard for one may not be that for another. It should be realized that some children are not capable of attaining a high standard and recognition should be given not only for excellence but also for effort. Noting progress, however slight, is an incentive to greater effort. Recognition should be given to pupils whose writing is excellent, and to those who are showing improvement. The teacher should display on the bulletin board the best sample of handwriting and also those which show improvement so that progress is evident to each pupil.

One of the strongest motivating devices is self-evaluation. Let the pupils appraise their own strengths and weaknesses with respect to their writing, so that they will become conscious of the defects which detract from the quality of their own handwriting.

MOVEMENT AND POSITIONS

MOVEMENT

1. The arm, hand, and fingers cooperate in the handwriting movement. None of these three should dominate, although the amount of reliance placed on one or another is at least partly a matter of individual differences.
2. With most pupils the hand is turned on the side and rests on the third and fourth fingers.
3. The hand slides across the page as the letters are formed.
4. The fingers grasp the pen lightly approximately one inch from the tip.



POSITIONS

1. The pupil should sit reasonably erect with hips back in the seat and with both feet on the floor.
2. The pupil should sit high enough in his desk so he may see over the hand doing the writing.
3. The forearm not involved in the writing rests at least partly on the desk, the hand holding the paper.
4. The arms should rest easily on the large muscle of the forearm, with the right elbow just off the edge of the desk.
5. The writing materials should not be so thick as to make control difficult; i.e. bulky notebooks or exercise books should be avoided as they prevent the arm from being kept in a proper position.
6. In manuscript writing the paper is parallel to the edges of the desk for the right-handed. For the left-handed the paper is slanted to the right.
7. In cursive writing the lower edge of the paper is at a right angle to the forearm doing the writing.

CONSIDERATION OF THE LEFT–HANDED STUDENT

Extensive studies have determined that 11.1% of the total number of children have a marked left-handed preference in writing. It becomes imperative, therefore, that considerable attention be paid to this group of children who are forced to adjust to a right-hand environment.

There is evidence to indicate that forcing a left-handed child to change to writing with his right hand may contribute to speech difficulties and nervousness due to frustration and discouragement. Therefore, it is felt that the beginning pupil who shows definite left-hand dominance should be permitted to write with his left hand. However, if he is ambidextrous and has not yet established marked left-hand tendencies in all activities, he should be encouraged to write with his right hand.

It is advisable to conduct simple tests to determine whether a child is definitely left-handed. Several of the following may be used in conjunction with close observation of the child in daily work and play to observe dominance and consistency.

1. Reaching for a high object
2. Winding a ball of string
3. Cutting strips from different colors of paper
4. Stringing beads
5. Throwing a ball

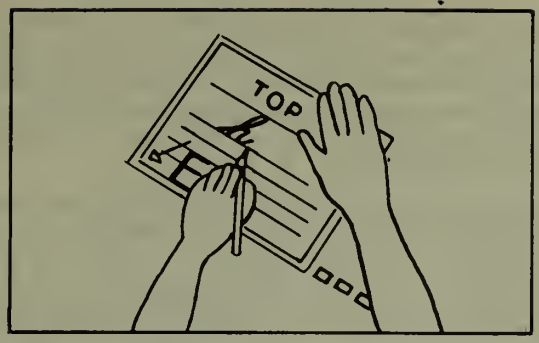
If a strong left-handed preference is discovered, it becomes the responsibility of the Grade One teacher to pay close attention to establishing correct procedures and good writing habits. It may be essential to eliminate paper work until he has learned correct letter formation at the chalkboard where there is greater freedom of arm movement. At the chalkboard he will learn to keep his hand below the line of writing.

It is good practice to group left-handed pupils for writing instruction so that they will work with others having similar difficulties.

The handwriting of left-handed pupils can be just as satisfactory as that of the right-handed in quality, legibility and speed if the following suggestions are followed:

1. A left-handed pupil should be seated, in order to avoid shadows, so that the light comes over his right shoulder.
2. The position of the body is the same as that for right-handed writers.
3. It is essential that the paper be sloped to the right from Grade One on, and that the writing arm be at right angles to the slope of the paper.

NOTE: The paper for left-handed writers should be sloped so that bent-wrist writing does not develop.



The above diagram illustrates the best position of paper and pencil for left-handed writers. Surveys have shown that it yields the best results in terms of both writing quality and rate. Note the angle of the paper in relation to the desk edge and writing arm. The arrows indicate a sideward slant motion of the writing arm. The writing slant is forward.

4. Pencil grip is the same as that for right-handed writers. Pencils should be held loosely. It is recommended that the left-handed hold their pencils slightly higher—about 1¼ inches from the point so that they may see what they have written.

Teachers should make a special effort to discourage bent-wrist writing (hooking) which often develops because the child wishes to watch his written work. The bent-wrist position results in smudging of work. It reduces speed because the child experiences difficulty in moving the hand across the paper. The paper should always be held with the idle hand, and should be shifted upward as the page is written.

If a child is beginning to hook, the teacher should reteach the proper paper and pencil position. While the child is making the transition to straight-wrist writing it is likely that the quality of writing will deteriorate and speed decrease. The teacher must allow for this in her assignments and give him encouragement and guidance.

The key people in the formation of correct habits are the primary teachers. It is very important that the children establish good habits in Grade One. It is easier to teach and then maintain these habits than to unlearn incorrect habits later. If the primary teachers have stressed the desirable methods of writing for the left-handed there should be little difficulty in making the transition from manuscript to cursive writing. Some of the left-handed tend to develop a backhand slant. This is permissible as long as the slant is consistent and the writing legible.

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

Children entering school differ in every way imaginable — size, weight, ability to express themselves, ability to concentrate for any length of time, etc. They vary in mental age and rates of learning. Some of these factors have a bearing on the child's progress in learning to write as well as in learning to read since writing is a thinking process as well as a mechanical one. To learn to write, his visual perception must be well developed for he must be able to see and remember tiny variations in letters in order to form them accurately.

Letter formation requires smooth motor coordination between eye and hand and good muscular control of arm, hand and finger muscles. Since children come from varying home environments and backgrounds of experience some are proficient in the use of pencils and tools and others are not. Many children have not developed the finer muscle control adequately when they begin school. The teacher of beginning children watches each pupil closely in his daily handwork activities to determine when he is ready to write. She notes the extent of his motor control and visual ability. Physical defects such as poor vision or malformation of the hand will affect the ability to write. She realizes that children with defects will not be able to attain the usual standards or follow the prescribed style of handwriting. These children require understanding and constant but kind encouragement.

At first large sheets of unlined paper may be used for learning manuscript letter forms or perhaps considerable work may be done at the chalkboard. Basic strokes and patterns with the fundamental strokes may be used to develop muscular control, visual perception and facility in spacing before actual words are introduced. Next, children may write on folded paper or paper with wide spaces and guidelines. If all the children are not ready for this stage the class may be grouped. Some children may need to trace samples the teacher prepares before they are able to form letters accurately. Later in the first year the children who have mastered letter formation easily will progress to writing on paper with narrower spaces.

In Grade Two this grouping may continue. It has been found that if a child having a certain writing problem is located with others having the same difficulty, his improvement is rapid. This grouping may include left-handed children, those with poor muscular control, those who require help with letter forms, etc. The groups remain flexible. Those with poor muscular coordination may still use a large pencil. These children may have the amount of work cut down to suit their ability. Not all children will be ready to begin cursive writing at the same time. Again the class may be grouped.

In Grade One, the primary concern is to help the child learn the basic forms of manuscript writing. Teachers of the higher grades must see their handwriting instruction in terms of the individual pupil. One child may not be forming his letters correctly. Another may not have a uniform slant. Still another may not have proper alignment and may have difficulty keeping his letters on the base line. Pupils should be encouraged to analyze their own handwriting and practice those skills which need improving.

In Division Two, development of individual styles will occur. Although a range of differences is allowed, consistency must be striven for. Consistency is perhaps of greater importance than any single factor in writing legibly. The pupil must be reminded of the danger to legibility of extremes in shape, slant, size, spacing and speed. The aim is not for strict conformity but for development of a good quality in style with variations that may result from the person's capabilities and temperament.

FROM MANUSCRIPT TO CURSIVE WRITING

Writing should be regarded as a means of expression for the child. It is taught for a need and purpose when the child shows a readiness and a desire to learn. Readiness for writing grows as the pupil grows and develops physically.

A "Getting Ready to Write" program could include:

1. Activities such as painting, using scissors, crayons and chalk; using simple tools, and throwing or catching a ball.
2. Games to determine the use of the right or left hand.
3. Sky-writing and tracing to use the large muscles for tracing forms in the air.
4. Copying objects and designs for the chalkboard.

Some suggestions for readiness activities follow.

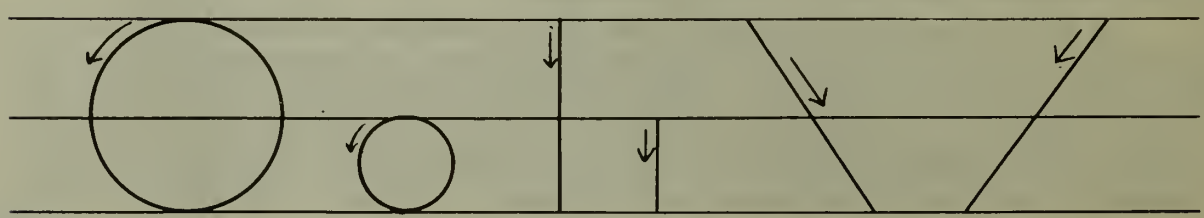
5. Observing the good example of the teacher.
6. Stressing good posture.

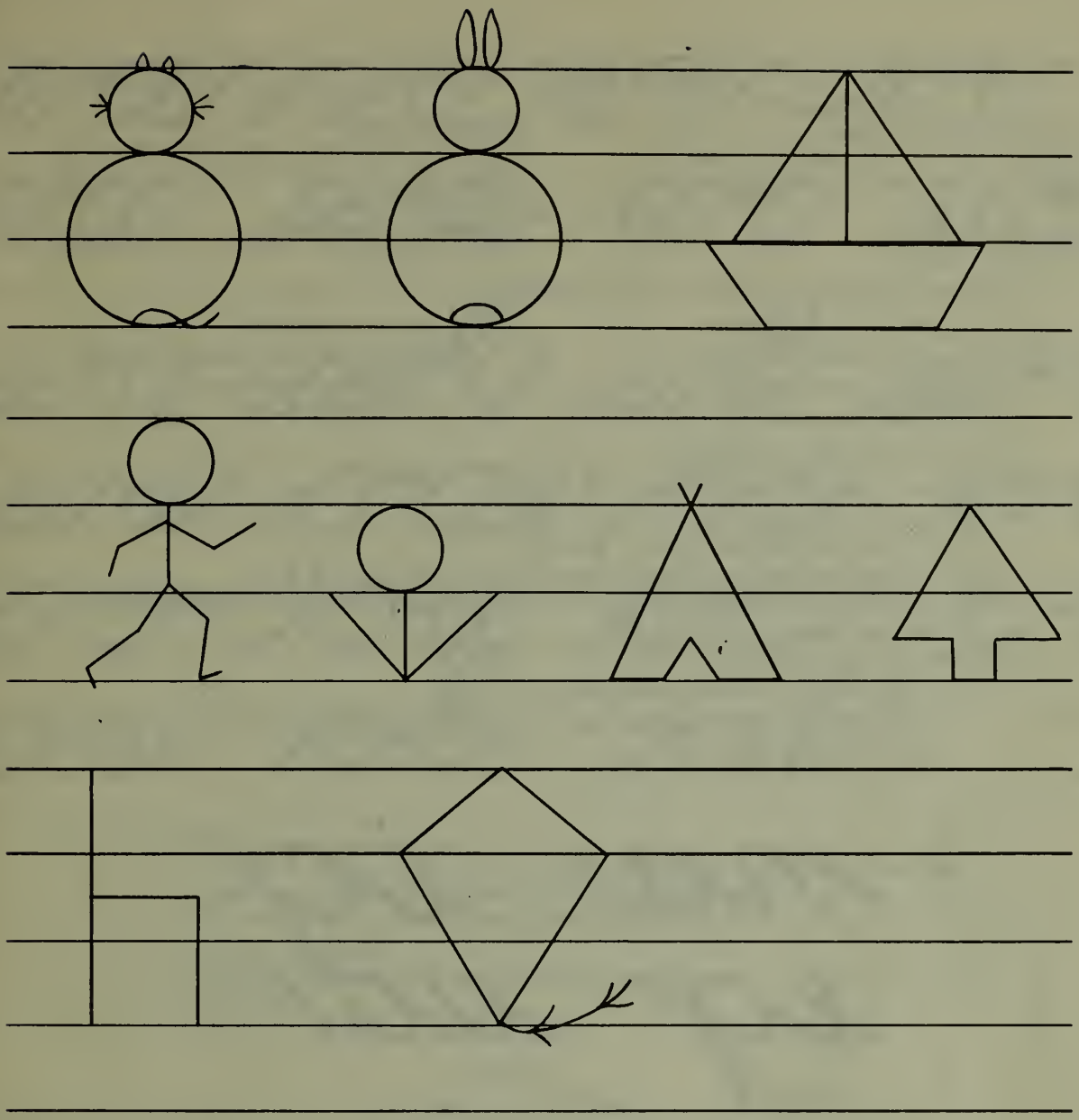
Manuscript writing is the simplest form for the child at this time because it is best suited to his immature muscular control and readiness.

1. Only one form of the alphabet is needed for reading and writing.
2. The strokes are simple and easy to learn. Only straight lines and circles are involved. No connecting strokes are needed.
3. There is less strain on the pupil.
4. The letters are generally more legible.

It is advisable that the child begin with large letters and the size may be reduced as the child shows a readiness for this change.

READINESS ACTIVITIES





It is important to develop correct habits from the beginning. Check carefully body position, paper placement, arm and hand position, and pencil holding. Shape, stroke, spacing and rhythm should be stressed.

The child should be ready physically, mentally and emotionally before changing from the manuscript to the cursive forms. He should be able to hold the writing tool, move it freely and express himself through this form in simple sentences. As his needs and desires develop, the child should proceed to the more complicated but efficient forms of cursive writing.

The responsibility of transferring from manuscript to cursive writing must not be taken lightly. The teacher must judge carefully the time of this transfer by taking individual differences into consideration. Successful transfer is possible for some pupils as early as the latter part of Grade Two but is not desirable for other pupils until as late as Grade Four. (See section in Grade Three, **The Transition to Cursive Writing.)**

As has been suggested before, a child should have facility in both manuscript and cursive writing.

When the child understands the new form then the cursive form could be practiced at the chalkboard with simple words.

The following basic differences should be noted.

Manuscript	Cursive
Letters are made separately.	Letters are joined.
Pencils are lifted at the end of each stroke.	Pencils are only lifted at the end of the word.
Letters are made with downstrokes and circles.	Letters are upstrokes, ovals, downstrokes and connecting strokes.
There is no retracing.	Retracing is necessary.
Writing is vertical.	Writing is slanted.

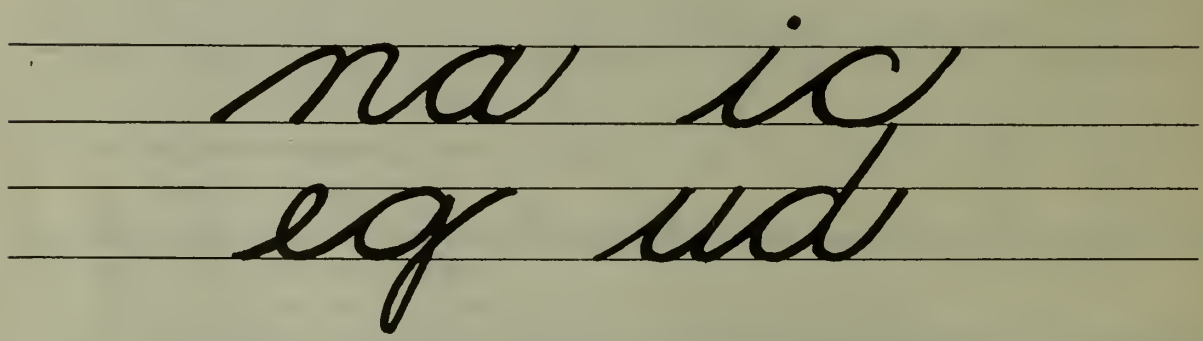
The following goals should also be kept in mind:

1. Join the letters in the words.
2. Slant the writing.
3. Hold the paper correctly.
4. Hold the pencil correctly.
5. Watch the spacing.
6. Keep a good position.
7. Watch the base lines.

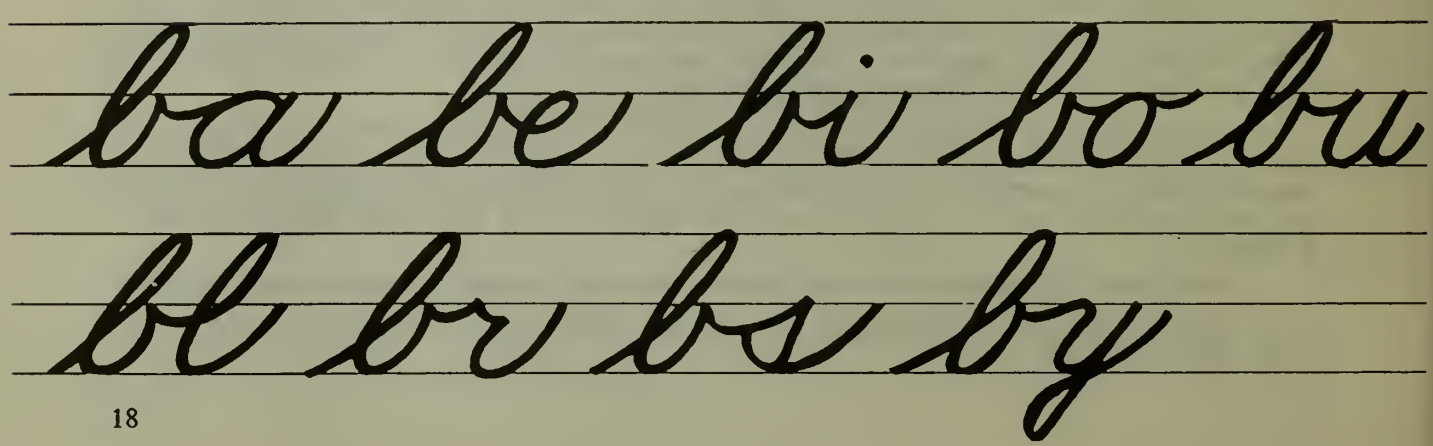
These errors should be checked:

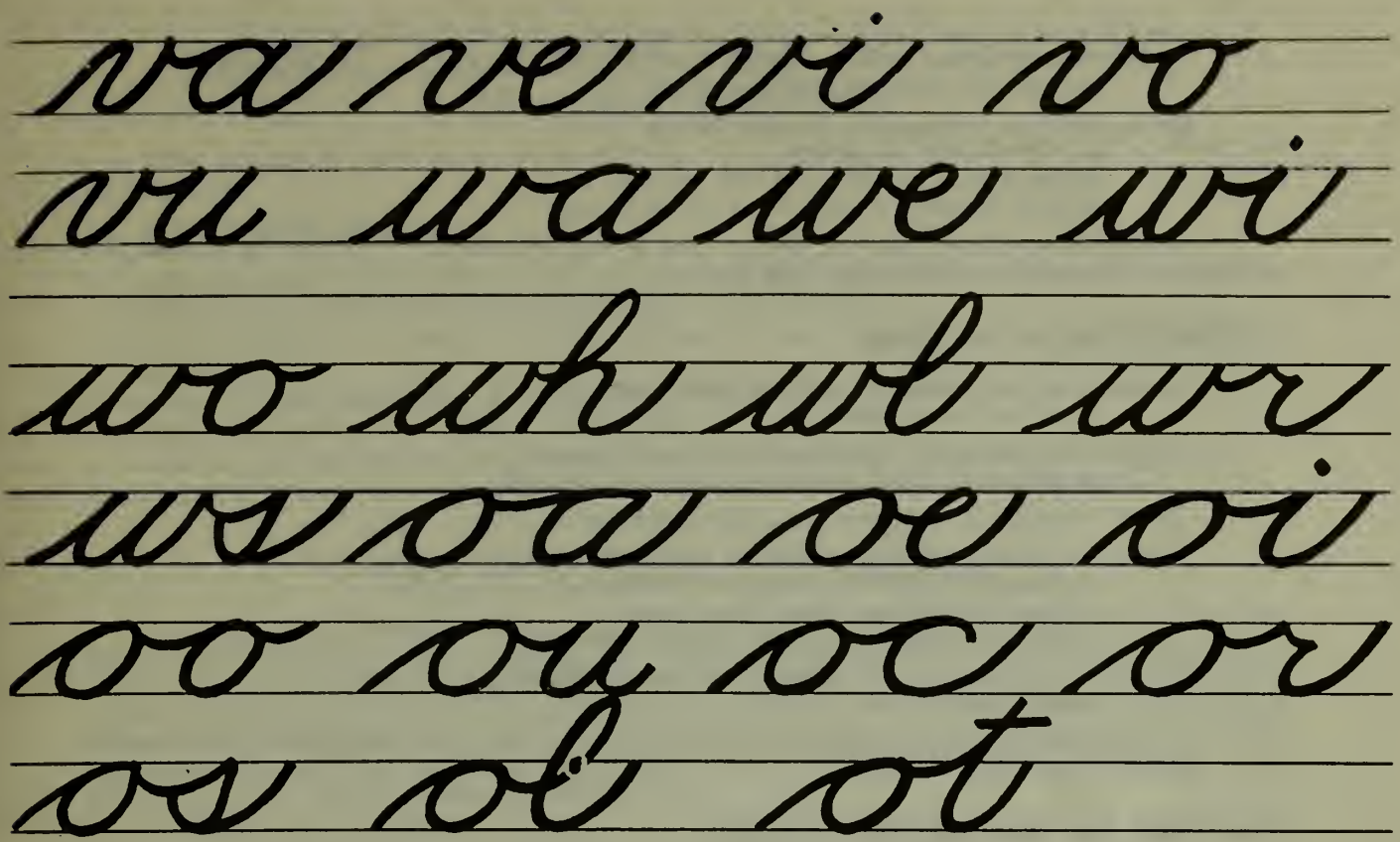
1. Failure to close the letters. / a – o /
2. Closing the top loops. / i – e /
3. Looping the non-looped letters. / e – i /
4. Using straight up and down strokes rather than rounded (u, n, l, t, e). Considerable practice should be given in keeping the down stroke as a straight line.
5. Dotting the i's and crossing the t's.
6. Difficulty with end strokes.
7. Difficulty with the following combinations:

   a. Care should be taken with the joining stroke involving the letters 'a', 'c', 'g', 'd'. Some examples are:



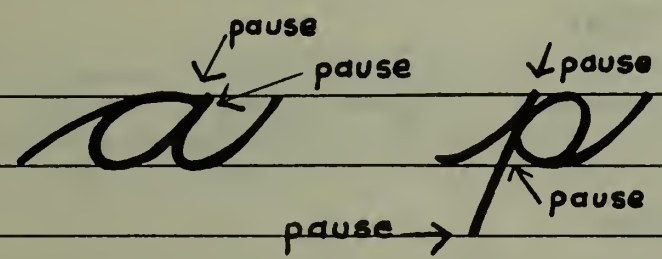
   b. Another group of letters which poses some difficulty is made up of 'o', 'v', 'w', and 'b'. The tendency with these is to make the joining stroke a straight line or to bring it down too close to the base line. The following combinations are some of the more difficult ones involving these letters:





8. Joining upper case letters:
   A, C, H, J, K, M, N, R, U, X, Y, and Z are joined to the lower case letters.
   L and Q are difficult to join and must be handled carefully.
   The remaining upper case letters should not be joined.

9. Retracing difficulties:
   A pause before retracing will help to avoid looping.
   Examples:



EMPHASIS IN INSTRUCTION

In the interest of good teaching we will emphasize the physical and psychological factors that are important in the development of acceptable handwriting skills.

PHYSICAL FACTORS

Chairs, tables, or desks are selected to fit the student.

Lighting is provided from over the student's shoulders:
left shoulder for right-handed students, and
right shoulder for left-handed students.

Smooth writing surfaces and an adequate work area are essential for relaxation and good form.

Good posture as developed by directed teaching in: short periods of instruction, proper physical facilities and with adequate physical exercises at other times during the day.

Writing lessons should follow a period of quiet activity and should be followed by a lesson that will apply the basic points emphasized in the lesson.

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

Limitation to brief periods of instruction until muscular control has been attained.

Introduction of forms by demonstration at the chalkboard, use of models, books, charts and individual materials.

Use of a baseline in demonstrating at the chalkboard;

Referral to alphabet cards mounted above the chalkboards; in presenting forms. Care should be taken to point out relationships in new forms to be presented as compared to those already mastered.

Selection of simple and meaningful material for the beginning stages of instruction.

Unsupervised writing exercises and excessive copying of letter forms should be avoided. Exercises should always be purposeful.

FACTORS OF CHALKBOARD USAGE

With thoughtful planning, the chalkboard has wide usage in the teaching of handwriting skills. It is absolutely essential for demonstration purposes and may be put to many functional uses. In the beginning stages of the development of skills and in later remedial exercises, frequent use of the chalkboard can be of great assistance to the child.

The teacher often finds the use of a music staff liner of great assistance when chalk is placed in the first, third, and fifth holders. Sometimes the chalkboards are treated by lining with India ink or carbonized marking pencil. The latter should only be applied by a competent person and with the authorization of school authorities.

EVALUATIVE FACTORS

A most essential means of evaluation is the instructor's observation of children during writing exercises with attention given to the manner in which they form letters.

At regular intervals a study of the student's handwriting during functional and directed sessions is essential.

HINTS TO TEACHERS

All teachers should write carefully and well so that the child has correct, legible forms before him at all times.

The teaching of writing is an extremely important part of the daily program. The writing lesson entails much thoughtful planning and correlation with other aspects of the day's work. The teaching of letter formations is not sufficient. The lesson itself must always be based on pupil need as well as on new material. The effectiveness of the daily writing program is finally shown by how well the children write.

Teachers should accept only neat, legible writing. We do the children no service when we accept papers that are not respectable. Standards must be kept high at all times, but reasonable at all times too!

Pencils of unusual size, such as very thin or very short pencils, should be avoided.

One of the commonest causes of deterioration of handwriting is the excessive copying of notes from the chalkboard. Children should not be required to do more writing than might be expected of them by their degree of development.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES FOR THE TEACHING OF HANDWRITING

The program of instruction in the handwriting skills requires students to attain or approach the following goals:

AT ALL GRADE LEVELS:

1. Become familiar with better handwriting procedures and habits to maintain proficiency in the selection of materials, positioning of the paper, and correct physical posture.
2. Become familiar with the correct handwriting forms that have been adopted for the standardization of instruction.
3. Perfect to a reasonable degree of accuracy the style and form that a student may have developed through early instruction in another school system.
4. Guidance in proper style and form suitable for left-handed students when appropriate.
5. Acceptance of each written assignment as an opportunity to perfect handwriting skills.

THE DIVISION I PROGRAM

Grade I and II teachers should bear in mind that the ultimate objectives of printing instruction and practice is the transfer to cursive writing. This transfer is made at a time when the child has shown a sufficient degree of maturity and competence to make the change. This degree of maturity is normally achieved during the third year of school, but some children may be ready slightly before this and still others should not be required to do cursive writing until they have reached Grade IV. The letter forms and the manner of constructing each letter are designed to make this transition easier and more natural. Teachers of Grade I and II are requested to adhere to:

(1) The letter forms as outlined.

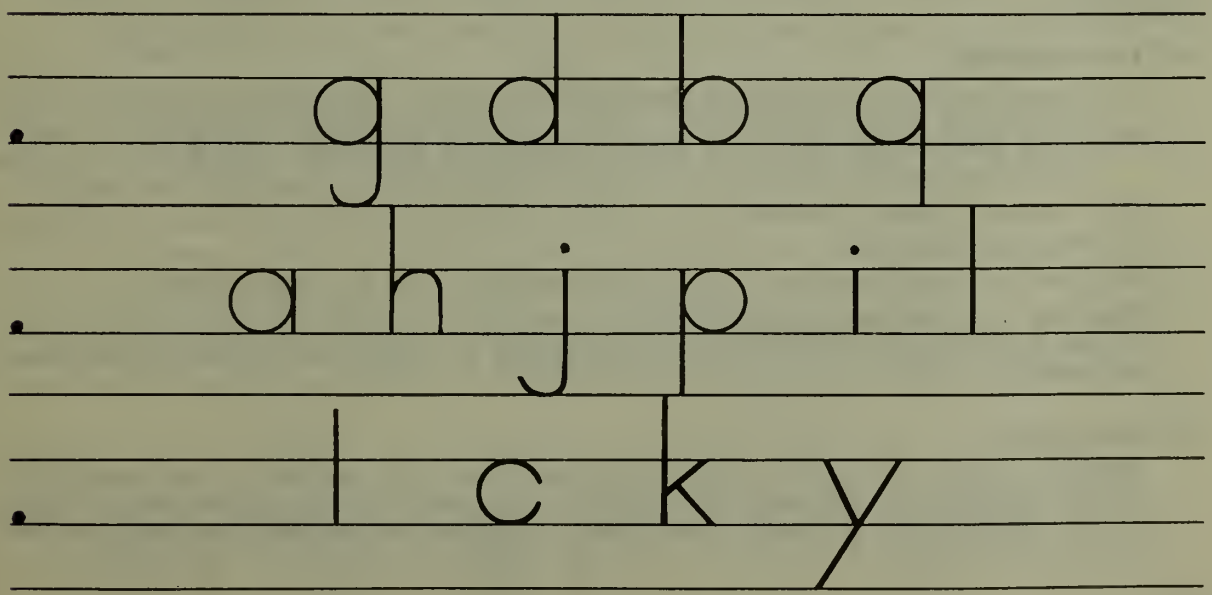
(2) The direction and sequence of strokes used in forming each letter.

Teachers should note:

(1) Printing in these grades is always vertical for both the left-and right-handed.

(2) The paper is not sloped until the transfer to cursive writing is made, except for left-handed writers (see note page 14).

(3) In these grades, except for the beginning stages in Grade I when unruled paper is used, guidelines should always be used to determine the height of letters. A helpful practice is to establish base lines for printing and writing. These prevent overlapping of letters with those above or below. One way is to mark every third line on the page with a dot. These marked lines become the base of each letter formed.



(4) At each grade level small letters are one full space high and tall letters two full spaces.

(5) As children will copy the style which a teacher uses, all chalkboard printing should adhere to the letter shape and formation which is recommended in the program. A teacher should not have one style of printing for formal lessons and a second for other work.

LESSON GUIDELINES

Writing materials should be of good quality and carefully selected. Children have a tendency to bring many undesirable types of pencils (awkward sizes and shapes, hard lead, etc.) and incorrectly ruled scribblers and papers to school. Teachers should discourage this practice and require that all children use only materials recommended by the teacher or provided by the school.

GRADE I

Suggested Materials and Sequence of Presentation:

1. Children who seem to require it should begin with chalkboard writing.
2. Unlined paper—folded in half 8½" x 11"—lengthwise.
3. Unlined paper—folded in quarters 8½" x 11"—lengthwise.
4. Lined—½"—two spaces 8½" x 11" worksheets or exercise books, i.e. tall letters are 1" high.
5. Lined—5/16"—two spaces 8½" x 11" worksheets or exercise books.

Pencil: Primary Black Pencil—Thick Lead. Some acceptable mechanical pencils are also available.
A slightly smaller pencil may be used by mature students in the latter part of the year.

Time: Approximately sixty to seventy-five minutes per week should be planned for formal instruction in writing. This time should be divided into several daily periods at the discretion of the teacher.

Speed: No specific requirement. The teacher should encourage freedom of movement rather than the tendency some children may have to "draw" the letters.

Size: Lower case letters should be one space high. Upper case letters should be two spaces high. Numbers should be two spaces high at first and finally one space high.

Objectives: To develop skill in the complete mastery of manuscript forms according to the style taught in Alberta. The child should be trained to recognize the correct forms and to make them correctly.

METHOD

(a) Use of Materials

I. Formal instruction should begin with unruled worksheets. No guidelines are required at first and printing should be large until a measure of muscular control is established. As coordination develops, the size of the spaces is reduced by folding the sheet the long way first into halves, then into quarters, and finally into eighths if this is thought to be desirable.

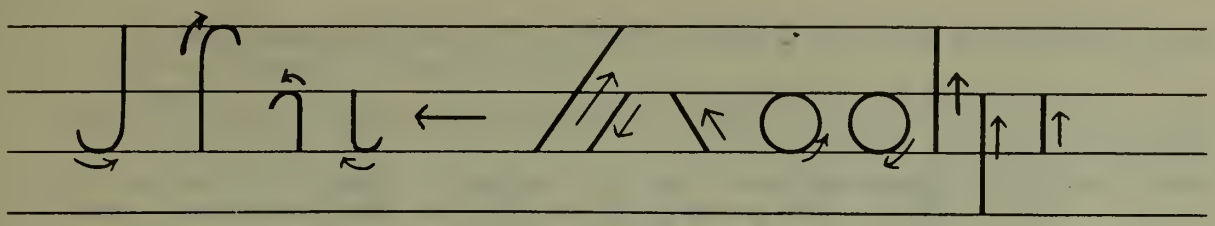
II. Transfer is made to worksheets or exercise books with ½" ruling and then to 5/16" ruling as control improves.

III. Keep a constant check on how the child holds his pencil and places the paper.

Note: Children's muscular control develops at varying rates. The time at which each pupil will transfer from one type of material to the succeeding one will depend upon his stage of development and maturity.

(b) Basic Strokes

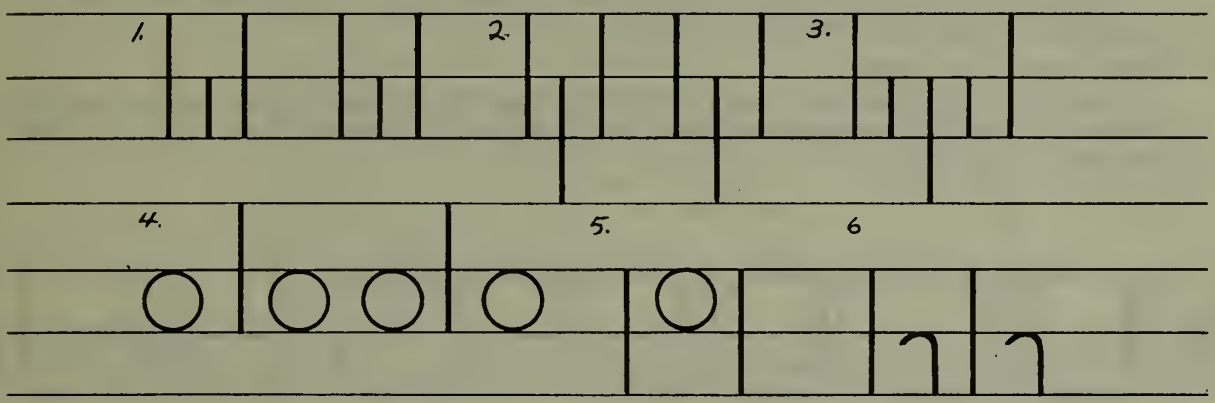
There are certain basic strokes used in the construction of the majority of the letters of the manuscript alphabet. These should be practiced before actual printing of letter forms is begun. (Some suggestions may be found on page 23.) It is important that the height and direction of these strokes be adhered to.



During the early stages, only one stroke should be practiced during a lesson.

(c) Patterning Basic Strokes

When children have become familiar with these basic strokes, variation in practice may be provided by arranging them in patterns. Such patterning provides the first practice in letter and word spacing.



I. Many patterns may be developed by combining the various strokes.

II. The width of one finger between patterns will provide a pupil with a guide for word spacing. Mature children outgrow this need before long, but some children require a means of quick space indication for some time.

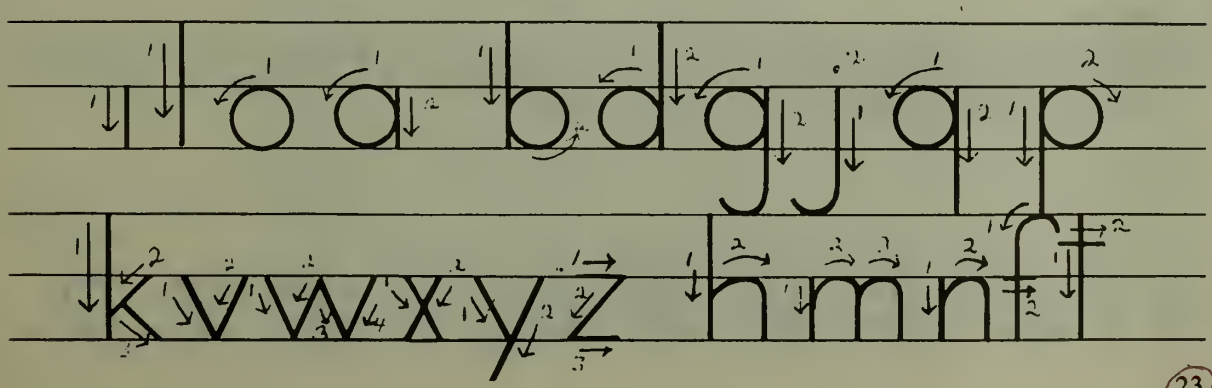
(d) Printing Letters and Words

From basic strokes and patterns children should make the transition to printed **lower case** letters.

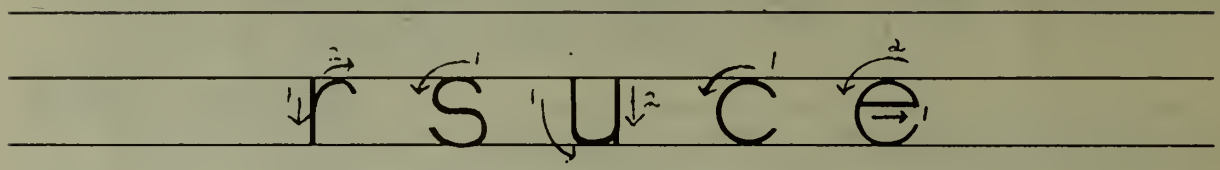
I. Letters requiring the same basic strokes should be grouped for practice purposes.
Note:

(a) Always make the stroke **nearest** the preceding letter first.

(b) The pencil **should be lifted** from the paper after each separate stroke when printing a letter.



II. The following letters not covered by the basic strokes should be taught later.

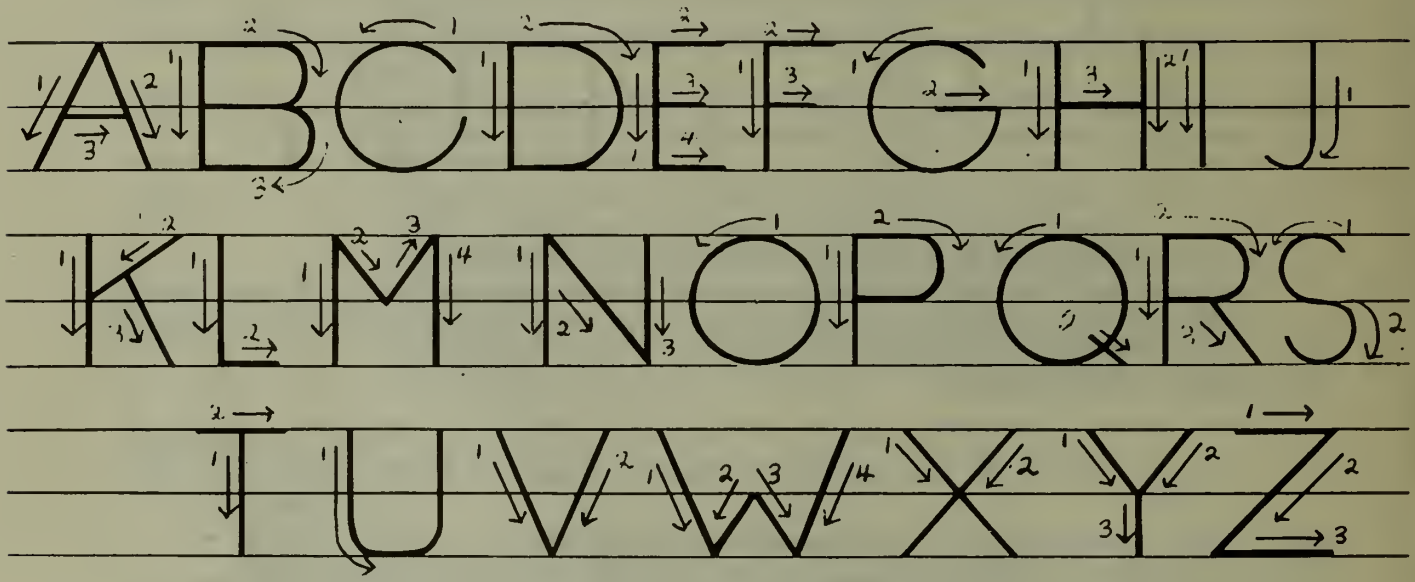


III. When learning two-space letters, some pupils encounter difficulty in placing them in the correct spaces. It is helpful if letters occupying the top two spaces (b, d, etc.) are taught first and those using the bottom spaces (g, q, etc.) are taught after the children have gained considerable skill with the first group.

IV. As soon as pupils are acquainted with the formation of enough letters to form a word, printing of known words should be undertaken. These may be selected from any phase of the program if pupils know them by sight.

(e) Printing Upper Case Letters

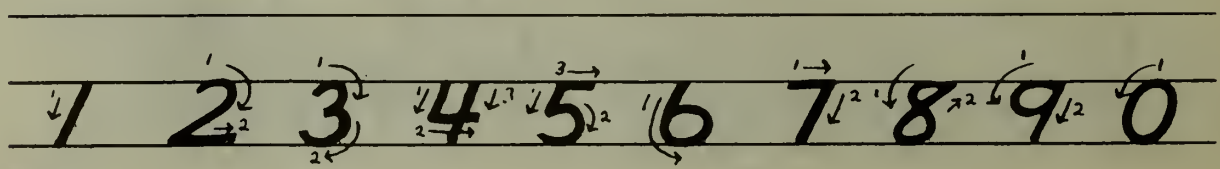
The printing of upper case letters should be delayed until pupils have acquired skill in printing the lower case letters. The capital and lower case forms of any letter should **not** be taught at the same time.



Grade I pupils always make upper case letters two spaces tall.

(f) Numbers

The method of writing numbers which a child acquires in Grade I generally continues throughout his lifetime. It is, therefore, essential that the correct formation of each number be taught in the first grade and be stressed anew in succeeding grades.



I. Numbers are two full spaces in height at the beginning of the year, but are reduced to one space in height by the end of the year.

II. Particular care should be taken in teaching the formation of 5, 8, and 9.

III. Teachers should keep in mind the form of numbers that pupils encounter in the Grade I arithmetic series in use in the schools. In general, this should be the accepted number form for the child, and he should then be permitted to use this number form in succeeding grades.

(g) Make a careful study of the suggestions for the instruction of the left-handed child.

GRADE II

SUGGESTED MATERIALS AND SEQUENCE OF PRESENTATION

1. Lined—5/16"—two spaces, i.e. tall letters two spaces high.
2. Lined—½"—ruled worksheets or interlined exercise books. Exercise books with ¼" ruling are also suitable.

Pencil: HB Pencil. Some students should continue to use the larger Grade I pencil until they show a proper degree of maturity and competence.

Time: Approximately seventy-five minutes per week should be arranged for instruction in writing in Grade II. Some specific time should be devoted to evaluating and correcting as well as to instruction in the basic skills.

Speed: Work toward thirty letters per minute for the latter part of Grade II.

Size: In Grade II each child should continue to use two spaces for all upper case and tall letters and one space for small letters until the letter forms are well mastered. In the second half of the year there can be a gradual reduction to ½" ruling, making tall letters ½" high and small letters ¼" high. Numbers should be one space in height.

Objectives: To continue the work begun in the first grade so that manuscript forms are made legibly and easily.

METHOD:

(a) The instructional procedure outlined for Grade I is continued in the second grade. Grade II teachers should be thoroughly familiar with the first year program and carry on their instruction in a similar manner.

(b) Remedial groups and re-teaching may be necessary to correct faults and to help pupils with poor muscular control. The wider-lined materials used in Grade I may have to be continued for a time with pupils who have control problems.

(c) Continue to check the manner in which the child holds his pencil.

(d) Keep in mind the particular problems of the left-handed in the class.

GRADE III

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND PRESENTATION:

Lined—½"—interlined exercise books or exercise books with ¼" ruling.

Pencil: Regular HB pencil.

Time: Approximately seventy-five minutes per week for instruction in writing, the time to be divided between actual teaching procedures and practice drills.

Speed: Work toward 40 letters per minute for the latter part of Grade III.

Size: Upper case letters and tall letters: full space or ½" high; other letters: one-half space or ¼" high. Numbers: one space high.

Cursive Writing: For most students the Grade III year is the time when the transfer to cursive writing is made. However, some pupils are ready for this change during the Grade II year and still others may not be ready for the change until they are in Grade IV. The change to cursive writing should be gradual and carefully planned.
All students should continue to have regular practice with manuscript writing as well. There is good opportunity for this in art, map work, and work with charts and diagrams.

Objectives: To review and practice the work of the first two grades and to develop skill and the mastery of the cursive forms according to the style taught in Alberta. The transition from the manuscript style to the cursive style is of major importance. If the ground work in Grades I and II has been carefully laid the change should not present a major difficulty.

METHOD:

(a) Size of Printing and Writing

In Grade III lower case letters are ¼" high and upper case letters are ½" high. Avoid reductions in size beyond these limits.

(b) When to Begin Cursive Writing

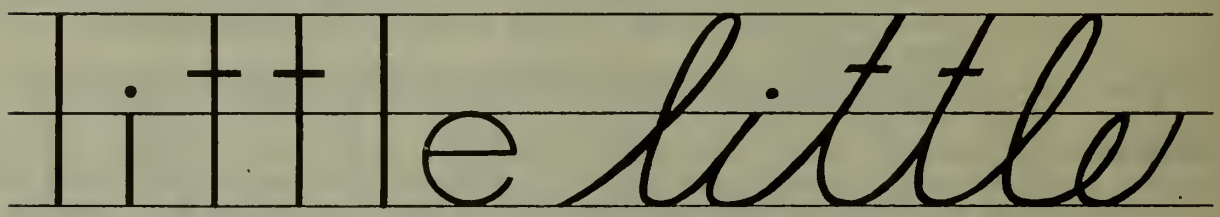
There is no set time when the transition to cursive writing must be started. It should only be undertaken when a teacher believes that the majority of her class is ready.

I. Printing should be of good quality before the change is begun as good printing is basic to good writing.

II. Teachers should keep in mind that the transition to cursive writing continues throughout the Grade III year.

(c) The Transition to Cursive Writing

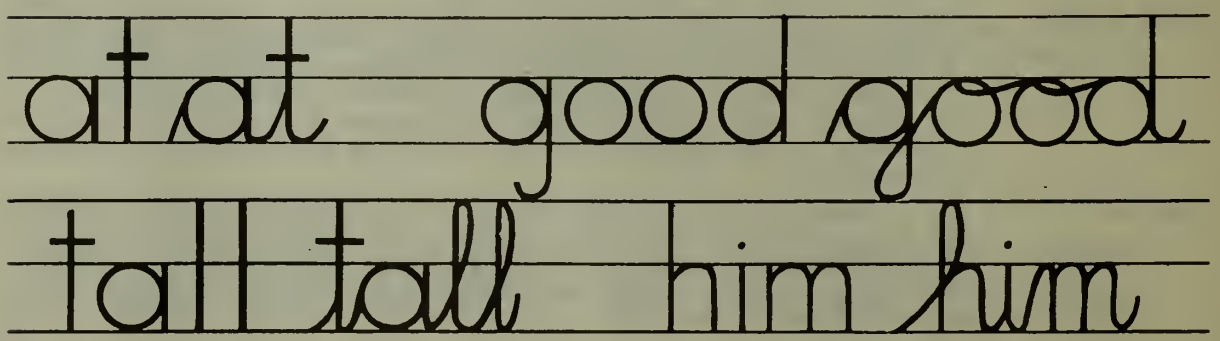
The transfer from printing to writing should be gradual and in the beginning, writing should be taught only in formal lessons. The application to other subjects should be delayed until pupils are completely familiar with letter forms and have developed considerable control. If this is not done, both writing and subject matter suffer as children are required to concentrate on two different and difficult operations at the same time.



This new form may be approached by:

1. Discussing this new way of writing by showing letters and words in both forms:
2. Recognizing the similarities and differences in letters and words.
3. Reading simple words and phrases, simple directions, and simple sentences in the cursive form.

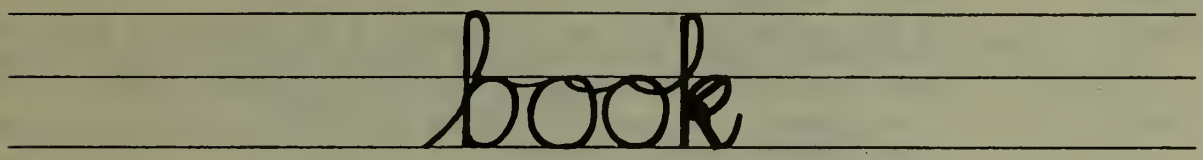
   (i) When first teaching pupils to write, it is desirable to use words. The teacher should select words that lend themselves to easy transition and do not involve letters having a distinctly new form, such as s, f, r, z. Phonetic elements also provide good handwriting practice.



In manuscript writing pupils are taught to lift the pencil after each stroke. In cursive writing the pencil is not lifted from the paper. The initial steps in writing should be:

—Print the word.

—Trace over the printed word without lifting the pencil.



Note that all letters of the lower case cursive alphabet start on the base line.

(ii) When pupils have gained some skill in joining letters by writing selected words, the individual letters should be taught and practiced. Letters having forms which differ markedly from the printed form should be taught last.

(d) Upper Case Letters

As suggested in printing, upper case letters should be taught apart from lower case letters. When the printed and cursive forms of the upper case letter are similar, the tracing procedure should be followed. It will be necessary to give special attention to the teaching of the other upper case letters.

(e) It is extremely important that the position of the pencil and the paper be checked regularly.

(f) Keep in mind the needs of the left-handed pupil.

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE FOR GRADES IV, V AND VI

"Handwriting is a means of expression—not an end in itself."
Emphasis given to:

1. Legibility in both manuscript and cursive writing.
2. Development of pride in neatness and form.
3. Development of skill in the use of tools and the attainment of good standards of physical posture.
4. Development of uniform slant.
5. Gradual increase in speed.
6. Constant attention to accuracy.

It is recommended that Grade IV teachers become thoroughly familiar with the Grade II and III program, particularly with respect to the **Transfer to Cursive Writing.** As this transition is made at varying periods throughout the years, and as cursive writing may not be used extensively in some classroom activities until late in the Grade III spring term, it is necessary for the Grade IV teacher to review, and, in many instances, to re-teach the writing introduced in Grade II and III.

NEW SKILLS INTRODUCED IN DIVISION II ARE:

1. Writing without guidelines
2. The use of pen and ink
3. The reduction in size of letters
4. The refinement of letter forms
5. The development of speed in writing

The grade outlines suggest when and how these skills may be introduced.

USE OF FOUNTAIN OR BALL POINT PENS

It is suggested that teachers discuss with pupils the general qualities of a suitable pen.
size: should be as large in diameter as the regular pencil
nib: very coarse or very fine points should be avoided
flow: the ink should flow readily without the need of undue pressure.

GRADE IV

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND PRESENTATION:

1. Lined—½"—interlined exercise books, or exercise books with ¼" ruling.
2. Lined—5/16"—one space.

Pencil: Regular HB pencil.

Pens: A good quality ball point pen is introduced at the beginning of Grade IV. Teachers may permit the use of a good quality fountain pen during the latter part of the Grade IV year if they feel that this is a desirable experience.

Form: Cursive writing is the form to be used, but there should be frequent lessons and exercises involving manuscript writing.

Numbers: Slightly less than one space high.

Speed: Work toward 50 letters per minute for the latter part of Grade IV.

Time: Approximately ninety minutes of instructional activities each week. Writing periods up to twenty minutes in length may be used as the children are now developing a longer interest and attention span.

Objectives:

1. Ability to write all letters of the alphabet, both small and capital, in the cursive style.
2. Ability to relax while writing and to write legibly.
3. Ability to visualize correct letter formation.
4. Ability to join letters in combination and to make endings, capitals, beginning letters, etc.
5. Ability to evaluate one's own writing habits and skills.
6. Retain the ability to use the manuscript forms.

METHOD:

(a) The Grade IV year should begin with a review and a re-teaching, where necessary, of cursive writing forms and techniques.
At the beginning of the Grade IV year, pupils have been away from writing situations for two months. In a large number of cases they have forgotten many of the cursive writing skills taught during the Grade III year. It is essential that this be recognized by the teacher and that the year begin with a thorough review of the Grade III program.

(b) The second step is to reduce the height of letters—i.e., tall letters are one space and small letters one-half space high. Numbers are slightly less than one space high.
Size should not be reduced until the teacher is satisfied that pupils are using the correct letter forms.

(c) The use of pen and ink is introduced. The time of year at which this is done is contingent on:
   i. The stage of muscular control that has been developed.
   ii. The successful transition from the larger writing of Grade III to the smaller writing of Grade IV.
   Normally several months should be devoted to practice with pencil or ball point before beginning to use pen and ink. It is not assumed that the use of pens, pen nibs, and fountain pens are an essential part of the program of every school.

(d) **Left-Handed Pupils**
The problems of left-handed pupils become more acute with the introduction of pen and ink. Teachers should note carefully the suggestions given under section **Left-Handed Pupils.**

GRADES V AND VI

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND PRESENTATION:

Lined—5/16"—one space.

Pencil: Regular HB pencil.

Pens: Good quality ball point pen or fountain pen.

Form: Cursive writing is the form to be used, but there should be frequent lessons and exercises involving manuscript writing.

Numbers: Slightly less than one space high.

Time: Approximately sixty minutes of writing experiences per week.
The length of the instruction period may be increased for the attention span of the student is growing consistently.

Speed: Work toward 75 letters per minute for Grade V; 90 for Grade VI.

Objectives:

1. Development of a greater sense of pride of accomplishment.
2. Increased ease, relaxation, and speed in writing.
3. Development of confinement of size of lower case letters to one-third space.
4. Increased independence in the student's personal evaluation of his writing skills and plans for self-improvement.
5. Development of satisfactory proficiency in writing with ink.
6. Progress in the mastery of muscular co-ordination.
7. Continued retention and development of the manuscript form. This can be done by correlation with art and map work.

METHODS:

(a) Grade V and VI teachers should note the size and letter formation as introduced in Grade IV. Practice of this form of writing should be continued for the first few months.

(b) During the year, refinement of letter formation is undertaken i.e., the height of letters is measured by units. Letters of one-unit are one-half a space high, those of two-unit are a full space high. These units may occur either above or below the line depending on the letter.

At the beginning of Grade V, spaces may be 5/16" high. Some reduction in letter size may take place as the pupil becomes more competent. It is conceivable that by the end of Grade VI this reduction in size may be allowed as long as the relative size of letters is maintained.

Lower Case Letters

One-Unit Letters:
i, u, w, e
a, c, o
m, n, v, x
s, r

Two-Unit Letters:
b, d, h, k, l, t
g, q
y
j, p, z

Three-Unit Letters:
f

Upper Case Letters

Two-Unit Letters:
O, A, C, E
P, R, B
M, N, U, V, W
Q, X, H, K
T, F
L, D
S, G
I

Three-Unit Letters:
Y, Z, J

(c) Greater emphasis may be placed on speed as control in the writing skills develops.

As individuals differ widely in writing skills, emphasis on speed should never be allowed to interfere with legibility of writing. However, we must recognize that the demands on the child's time for writing notes, etc., will increase throughout the Grades V and VI, junior high school, and high school years. It is, therefore, essential that he be trained to write rapidly and legibly.

A PLAN FOR THE HANDWRITING LESSON

TOPIC:

1. **Aim of the lesson**
   a. General—e.g. increased legibility.
   b. Specific—e.g. the teaching of a particular letter form.
2. **Preparation**
   a. Pupil-teacher isolation of problem and development of need.
   b. Preparation of board, desks, and materials.
3. **Presentation**
   a. Analysis of that aspect of the problem to be covered by the present lesson.
   b. Standards set by analysis and by demonstration.
   c. First attempts by the pupils under teacher supervision.
   d. Constructive self-criticism guided by the teacher—check with models—encouragement.
   e. Practice as needed. Repeat previous steps if necessary.
4. **Conclusion**
   a. Application—use in words and in sentences.
   b. Evaluation
      i. recognition of progress and accomplishment.
      ii. appreciation of effort.
      iii. recognition of further needs.

EVALUATION

The evaluation of handwriting is concerned chiefly with measuring the degree to which a child approaches an accepted standard of quality and speed for his age and grade, and the determination of the amount of progress or improvement which has taken place in a given space of time. Definite techniques should be devised for evaluating the progress in handwriting.

The progress has, of course, to be measured against those objectives or goals which set out the instructional or teaching procedures and the evaluation techniques which will prove most effective. As stated in the section on the philosophy of the teaching of handwriting, legibility, ease of writing and speed should all receive the critical study of the teacher and the pupil. It is essential that through the handwriting program the student's difficulties are diagnosed in a manner that will encourage individual improvement.

In general, one should always remember that a pupil's progress should be measured in terms of individual achievement rather than in competition with other members of the class. Thus self-checking by each child is one of the best incentives to developing better form in writing. Commendation of effort and improvement in handwriting is a great impetus for further effort and self-directed practice, but comparison by marks, with those who have greater skill, is discouraging.

Some children will probably not excel as writers and may become discouraged if perfection is the goal to reach.

The basis for evaluation should be legibility, general appearance, and neatness including evenness of pressure and freedom from blots. Pupils should not erase or write over their handwriting, but should practice the writing of letters or words that are giving trouble.

Proper headings should be required on all papers which the students prepare for submission to the teacher.

STANDARDS OF LEGIBILITY — MANUSCRIPT WRITING

In order to evaluate there must be certain standards of legibility.

Letter Formation

Letters in manuscript style should follow the forms used in the guide and should be formed according to directions as outlined. It is suggested that the child learn the name of each letter form as it is presented.

Stroke

The student must develop a uniform quality of line.

Spacing

The width of one letter or finger is suggested for spacing between words. The width of two letters or two fingers, is suggested for the spacing between sentences.

Legibility

The letters in each word should be closely but evenly spaced. Firm straight strokes and round circles make for better legibility.

Formation of the Numerals

Number forms should follow the forms used in the guide and should be formed according to the directions as outlined. Until good form is well established, the numerals are to be two spaces tall. Later they may be reduced to a single space in height.

STANDARDS OF LEGIBILITY—CURSIVE WRITING

Letter and Numeral Formation should conform to the models provided for the grade and included in the guide. The forms should be round and smooth. Common difficulties such as failure to close letters, omission of parts of letters, addition of parts of letters should be checked in all the written work of students. The students should be given practice assignments to correct these difficulties.

Uniformity of slant is to be an objective at all times.

The size of letter forms is extremely important. A gradual reduction in letter size will take place as handwriting becomes more mature. No rigid limits are set for the final size of letters, but the letters should not be so small that the writing tends to become illegible. Keep small letters one-half the height of upper case and tall letters.

Maintaining proper margins depends upon the size of the paper. On eight-inch paper the suggested margin is one inch on the left side and one-half inch on the right side. The main consideration is a well-arranged paper.

Proper indentation of paragraphs is at least one-half inch.

Spacing between words and between sentences is important. Use the width of one letter between words and the width of two letters between sentences.

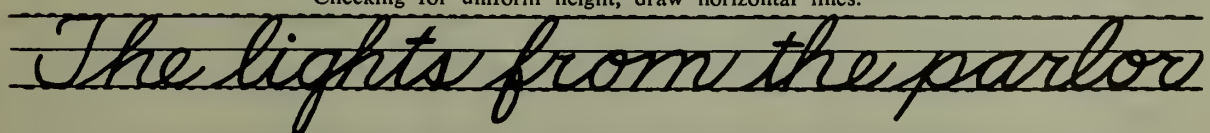
Alignment Uniform alignment, as used in the writing program, means that all the letters in a line of writing should rest on the base line. Alignment is also concerned with the relative heights of all letters. Thus tall letters should touch the top line of the space and small letters should be one-half space in height. Proper alignment can be readily checked by drawing a line across the page noting the uniformity in the height of letters of relative size

Line Quality All written lines should be uniform, distinct, and smooth. In pen and ink writing avoid alternate heavy and light lines. Cramped movements, faulty pen nibs, or irregular pressure may cause poor line quality.

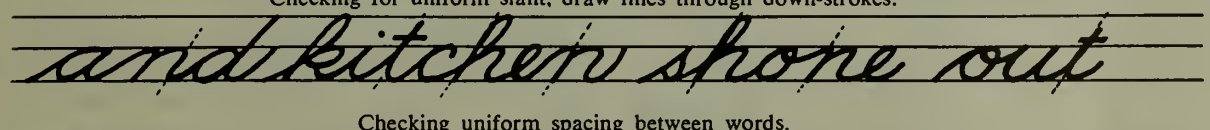
Pencil Pressure It is important that children be trained to write freely and without undue pressure. Excessive pressure on the pencil sometimes results in the unsightly appearance of the page under the one being written on.

HOW TO ANALYZE YOUR HANDWRITING

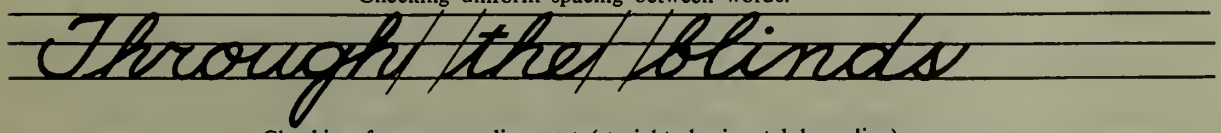
Checking for uniform height, draw horizontal lines.



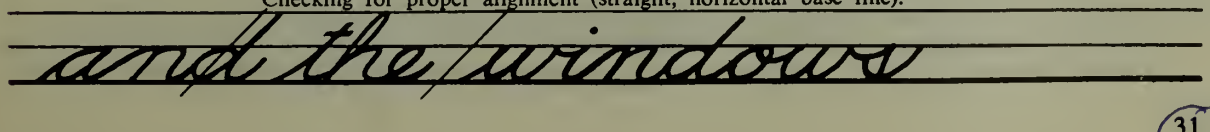
Checking for uniform slant, draw lines through down-strokes.



Checking uniform spacing between words.



Checking for proper alignment (straight, horizontal base line).



SCORING YOUR WRITING SKILLS

Make a check mark for each skill which is satisfactory.

Uniform height	Uniform slant	Uniform spacing between words	Good alignment	Letter forms

EVALUATION AND TESTING

Because the effectiveness of the writing program can be truly judged only by the improvement in the everyday writing of the pupils, a variety of testing procedures is desirable. There are three basic methods of evaluation:

(a) Individual evaluation by the pupil
(b) Teacher evaluation of the pupil's work
(c) Evaluation by a handwriting committee

A variety of techniques can be put to use in each of these methods of evaluation.

A. INDIVIDUAL EVALUATION

Each child should be competing with himself to improve his own handwriting. Almost every child will try harder if he can see improvement in his work from week to week and month to month.

METHOD 1:

Folders for each child's work may be distributed during the first week of school and a copied lesson should be the first sample to go into it. This same lesson could be given at intervals of one or two months to show the child his own progress. From time to time copy work, original stories, dictated spelling sentences, and daily reports or papers may be chosen by the teacher and the children to be included in the folder. All material included in the folder should be dated so that improvements are readily evident in relation to the time of year.

METHOD 2:

Scales similar to the following may assist the child or the teacher in the study of samples of handwriting.

(a)

INDIVIDUAL DIAGNOSTIC CHART

	Copy Work	Dictation	Daily Work
1. Spacing			
2. Form			
3. Size			
4. Slant			
5. Motor Control			

G—Good I—Improving X—Needs Special Attention

Samples to be evaluated according to the above scale should be taken from copy work, dictation, and daily unsupervised work. These samples should be taken monthly to show the child and the teacher the areas in which progress has been made as well as those in which practice is needed.

(b)

SCORE SHEET FOR EVALUATING QUALITY OF HANDWRITING

Indicate the score for each characteristic by placing a check mark in the appropriate cell.

CHARACTERISTICS	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
GENERAL APPEARANCE	25	20	15	10	5
FORMATION OF LETTERS	25	20	15	10	5
SPACING	15	12	9	6	3
SLANT	15	12	9	6	3
QUALITY OF LINE	10	8	6	4	2
SIZE AND ALIGNMENT	10	8	6	4	2

Total score _____

(c)

FORM FOR DETERMINING MARK FOR CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALITY

Indicate the score for each characteristic by placing a check mark in the appropriate cell.

Errors	CHARACTERISTICS				
	Formation of Letters	Spacing	Slant	Quality of Line	Size and Alignment
0 - 3	25	15	15	10	10
4 - 6	20	12	12 ✓	8	8
7 - 9	15	9	9	6	6
10 - 12	10	6	6	4	4
13 & Up	5	3	3	2	2

Total mark _____

(d) In evaluating the quality of handwriting, the teacher and the pupils should develop a clear understanding of the aspects that are to be considered.

From about Grade III up, the teacher and the pupils should develop cooperatively a set of criteria by which judgments are to be made, then use them for self-evaluation of handwriting quality at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year.

A sample of such a self-evaluation sheet follows (i)

*HOW GOOD IS MY WRITING?

Name_____ School _____

Age _____ Grade _____ Date_____

	Yes	No
1. Is it pleasing in general appearance?	_____	_____
2. Is it easy to read?	_____	_____
3. Do all the letters slant the same way?	_____	_____
4. Are all the loops closed?	_____	_____
5. Are all the letters correctly formed?	_____	_____
6. Are the strokes of the pen of uniform thickness?	_____	_____
7. Is the last letter of each word finished correctly?	_____	_____
8. Are the i's and the j's always dotted, but without using circles for dots?	_____	_____
9. Are the letters all the correct height?	_____	_____
10. Are the letters evenly spaced?	_____	_____
11. Are the words evenly spaced?	_____	_____
12. Do I always write with correct body position?	_____	_____
13. Do I keep my writing surface clear of other objects?	_____	_____
14. Do I place my paper or book in correct writing position?	_____	_____
15. Is my writing arm always parallel with the paper?	_____	_____
16. Is my writing arm almost wholly supported on the desk?	_____	_____
17. Do I push the paper or book ahead as the writing approaches the bottom of the page?	_____	_____
18. Do I hold the pen loosely enough that I do not tire quickly when I write?	_____	_____
19. Do I write rapidly enough for all practical purposes, without loss of quality?	_____	_____
20. Have I trained myself so well that I do all these things automatically, without having to waste time thinking about them?	_____	_____

*Courtesy Mr. A. C. Hume, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Saskatoon

(e)

Below is a sample Self-Check which may be used for the last half of the fifth grade and for the sixth grade.

(Place a check mark by the weaknesses in your handwriting.)

Name	Date	Date	Date
Position			
Incorrect			
Size of letters			
Too small			
Too large			
Vary in size			
Lines			
Too light			
Too heavy			
Varies			
Slant			
Irregular			
Back slant			
Too much slant			
Form of letters			
Incorrect strokes			
Strokes poorly made			
Not properly connected			
Capital letters weak			
Small letters weak			
Poor figures			
Spacing			
Too wide			
Too crowded			
Irregular			
Poorly spaced on a page			
Uneven margin			
Alignment			
Off the line			
Low letters uneven			
Tall letters uneven			
Speed			
Too slow			
Too fast			

B. TEACHER EVALUATION

A most essential means of evaluation is the instructor's observation of children during functional and directed writing sessions with attention given to the manner in which they form their letters and the ease with which they conduct themselves while writing.

Teacher evaluation of handwriting is a continuous and regular procedure since the teacher is anxious to assist the child to write as legibly, as easily and as rapidly as he can. This type of evaluation is done not only as a recognized part of the daily work, but is also a part of the teacher's preparation for reporting to parents.

It is recognized that encouragement and assistance versus comments such as "poor" or "keep on the line" will do much to help the child toward eventual mastery of the handwriting skill.

In planning a program of handwriting for the classroom, the teacher obviously must make provision for both the poor writer and the one who excels. It may be some time before children who have been away from writing (very little of which is done during the summer) get back into pattern, but after a few weeks it should be possible to determine the needs of all the children.

SUGGESTED TECHNIQUES FOR MEASURING ACHIEVEMENT

METHOD 1:

The teacher may develop a General Impression Handwriting Scale with the class. This is done as follows:

(a) Ask each child to prepare any regular paper, omitting his name. In place of the name, let him merely write the word "name" in order to preserve the page form.

(b) When the papers have been collected, they may be turned over to a committee of not more than three children from the class to be arranged in three piles: **Very Good, Satisfactory, Poor.**

(c) A posting committee may mount the papers with appropriate labels and change the specimens from time to time.

(d) From a, b, and c, a class General Impression Handwriting Scale may be developed.

One of the important values in using a scale for evaluation lies in having the children set up the scale themselves. By determining the points to be included, they learn the standards which they are trying to reach.

(e) Discuss this plan with the class, and from time to time permit them to take their papers up to the scale for comparison.

(f) Repeating this procedure several times during the year will provide abundant material for judging growth.

METHOD 2:

Use a commercial handwriting scale in the same manner as that described in Sections (e) and (f) above.

A suitable scale for this purpose is the Saskatoon Handwriting Scale. A separate scale is available for each grade. This scale is available from the Alberta School Book Branch, Department of Education.

METHOD 3:

The teacher should help children set up their own standards of handwriting and develop a self-check chart. They may then check their handwriting against their own chart. An excellent self-check chart for pupils appears in *HANDWRITING IN ACTION* by Freeman, published by Zaner Bloser and Company.

METHOD 4:

Another valuable means of determining progress is the dated sample plan. At the beginning of the fall term, ask each pupil to write a half-sheet of foolscap, disguising the purpose so that the pupils are not aware that it is their handwriting that is being examined. Be sure that each sheet is dated, then store the samples in a safe place. In January, repeat the procedure, and again in May. The three samples, placed side by side, give the best possible indication of the degree of improvement that has taken place. As every teacher knows, it is difficult to see the progress that is being made from day to day, but by comparing samples taken three or four months apart, the differences are sometimes startling. Such a plan is of value not only to the teacher but also to the pupils and at the same time forms the basis for an excellent type of reporting to parents during a parent-teacher conference, or sent home with the pupils at the end of the school year.

SPEED TESTING

METHOD 5:

The teacher may wish to add an occasional speed test for evaluating and motivation. In the senior grades, it is important that the speed of writing be measured, since perfection of form without sufficient speed to meet the needs of modern living is of little value.

Material appropriate to the grade level, containing only words which can be spelled without difficulty, may be written from a printed copy. The pupil should understand the purpose of the speed test, but quality must never be sacrificed to gain speed. Speed of writing is usually expressed in letters per minute. To calculate handwriting speed from Grade III up, proceed as follows:

1. Have the pupils memorize a simple verse, such as a nursery rhyme, and practice writing it several times.

2. Have paper and pencils ready, then say: "Today we are going to see how well and how fast you can write. When I say 'Go', I want you to start writing the verse that you have been practicing. Write it as well and as quickly as you can, and keep on writing it until I say 'Stop'. Ready? 'Go'."

3. The pupils should write for exactly two minutes, timed with a stop watch or a watch with a sweep second hand.

4. The teacher then collects the samples, determines the total number of letters written, being sure to deduct for letters left out, and adding extra letters that have been written in. The total is divided by two to give the number of letters written per minute. It will help if the teacher prepares a master sheet with the verse written out several times in successsion, upon which numbers are placed above the last letter of each word, indicating the total number of letters from the beginning to that point.

At the end of the school year acceptable speed standards should approximate the following:

Grade	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
Letters per minute	20-35	30-45	40-60	55-75	60-90	90	90

As previously indicated, individuals will differ widely in writing speed. Since the greater emphasis should always be placed on quality of handwriting, speed tests should not be given more than three or four times a year.

C. EVALUATION BY A HANDWRITING COMMITTEE

Another valuable source of evaluation can be the School Handwriting Committee. The unique feature of such a Handwriting Program is that it can be teacher maintained. No outside sources need dictate the lessons to be taught nor evaluate the children's papers. The Handwriting Committee would have the full responsibility for maintaining the quality of the program, for making changes in the program, for interpreting the program to new teachers and parents, and for evaluating the outcome of the Handwriting Program.

The Committee would be comprised of teachers who represent each grade. Membership on the Committee would rotate and the period of membership would usually be two years. Eventually every teacher on the elementary staff would serve on the Committee. The chairman of the Committee would be elected from the membership as would be the secretary. Meetings could be held once a month.

The Committee could request a specific type of paper to be evaluated each month. Notice of the type of paper should be advertised a week or more before it is due. A different type should usually be requested each month for the purpose of providing multiple opportunities to observe the children's handwriting in a variety of writing situations.

Each teacher should make an evaluation of the set of papers she turns in to the Committee representative of her grade. Individual comments should be made by the teacher on each paper.

The Handwriting Committee can then take the sets of papers and make a general comment on each set of papers and return them to the teacher for distribution to the children. This procedure permits the Handwriting Committee to observe the quality of handwriting of all of the children in the elementary school and to initiate suggestions for improvements whenever necessary.

Suggestions for change in the guide for instruction in handwriting and for methods of evaluating the handwriting are made to Committee members, also.

The Handwriting Committee must have the cooperation of every teacher in submitting the samples requested for evaluation. If now and again a teacher should submit a set of papers other than the type requested, it means that the judgments and comments made for this set of papers must be done without the benefit of other papers of this type.

If on the other hand, the teacher submits the sample papers requested by the Handwriting Committee for evaluation, each other teacher of that grade will also be submitting papers of that type and the judgment and comments made on each paper or for the class itself will reflect the comparison with papers of all children in that particular grade.

TEACHER EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INSTRUCTION

Just as it is important for the child to evaluate his handwriting, so it is important that the teacher study the effectiveness of the instruction provided.

Mid-year is a good time for the teacher to evaluate the effectiveness of her handwriting instruction.

1. Have I given handwriting its full time?
2. Has the handwriting of my pupils improved?
3. Has the number of poor writers been reduced?
4. Have children learned to diagnose their needs, to improve their weaknesses, and to evaluate their progress?
5. Are my daily lessons planned with long range objectives in mind?
6. Am I teaching writing in a functional manner as well as providing needed instruction and practice periods?
7. Do I accept poorly written papers or careless signatures at any time?
8. Is my own handwriting always a good model?

GUIDELINES TO REMEDIAL PRACTICES IN HANDWRITING

1. The teacher should be alert for early signs of difficulty. Few handwriting problems become serious if identified and provided for early in their development. The left-handed hook, for example, is not difficult to correct if a tendency to hook is noted early.
2. The improvement of handwriting, particularly where radical improvement is desirable, is often slow and difficult. For this reason, the cooperation of pupil and parent, as well as the teacher, is necessary. Pupils and parents, for example, can often profitably assist in identifying specific difficulties and in evaluating improvement.
3. Continuing interest in handwriting improvement on the part of the pupil is encouraged by provisions which enable pupils to identify stages of self-improvement. Such devices as charts and graphs are useful in this regard.
4. Remedial practices tend to be effective:
   (1) When the defects and causes are precisely identified; and
   (2) When improvement programs are directly related to the defect and the cause.

SELECTED HANDWRITING DEFECTS AND REMEDIAL MEASURES

Defect and Cause	Remedial Measures
Writer's cramp from holding pen too tightly.	More emphasis on arm movement. Encourage rhythmical movement. Relaxation exercises.
Problems associated with left-handedness.	Use preference test to determine whether child is really left-handed. Treat as normal. Paper perpendicular to writing arm. Hold pen 1¼" - 1½" from tip. Tolerate vertical or slight left slant.
Reversals.	Give a test of child's ability to copy reversible figures. Have child write from copy at his own desk rather than from memory. Increase supervision of writing. If reversals occur in certain letters, isolate those letters for special attention.
Lack of interest in writing.	Find pupil's interests. Through interests make him realize value of being able to write rapidly and well.

	Make pupil confident of his ability to write. Comment on slightest improvement. Have pupil compare his work with previous attainment. Have pupil analyze his own writing faults and how to overcome them. Sustain interest by applying handwriting skill to meaningful situations.
Lack of writing readiness: muscular and oculomotor coordination, perception, and precision of movement.	Provide experiences contributing to readiness: informal construction with tools, drawing on blackboard, clay modeling, paper cutting, rhythmical ball bouncing. Arrange writing when pupil is not fatigued. Have younger pupils work at blackboard with lines 4" apart. Copy to be followed at level with pupil's eyes. Avoid arm and finger movement exercises. Begin with meaningful words. Increase line width.
Poor letter form.	Isolate letters that need study. Drill these letters alone and in combination. Help pupil visualize distinctive qualities of letter and help him feel motions for forming it. Show pupils incorrect movements. Lead pupils to self appraisal.
Slow writing: incorrect position, too much pressure, wrong materials or instruments, poor rhythm, lack of practice.	Assign drill according to cause.
Extreme slant: writing arm too close to body, thumb too stiff, point of pen too far from fingers, improper paper position.	Encourage pupil to hold paper at right angles to writing arm. Direct writing motion toward center of body.
Mixed slant.	Mark original slant with red pencil. Encourage self-appraisal.
Poor word spacing caused by irregular, short, or long beginning or ending strokes.	Begin stroke just under tip of ending stroke. For letters with no beginning stroke, allow space for one.
Faulty letter spacing caused by poor slant.	Show pupils how to make the upward curves of the letters in the standard slant.
Faulty alignment: poor letter formation, lack of rhythm, failure to keep writing within line of vision.	Use rhythmic chants and music to encourage rhythm. Shift paper to left and keep writing in line of vision.

Adapted from Edna Lue Furness, "Diagnosis and Remediation of Handwriting Defects". XXXII (April, 1955), 224-228.

Courtesy National Council Teachers of English

TEACHER REFERENCES

Perhaps the best professional references in handwriting are those which place handwriting in context as one of language arts. As such, these books deal with much more than handwriting and are as a result, useful as references for the whole field of language teaching. Two of the best and most recent of these books are listed below.

Anderson, Paul S. **Language Skills in Elementary Education.** N.Y.: The MacMillan Company, 1964.
Greene, Harry A., and Petty, Walter T. **Developing Language Skills in the Elementary Schools.** Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1963.

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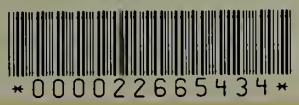
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